



CALFED
BAY-DELTA
PROGRAM

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SEP 07 1999

Comment

Date Sept 3 1999

The CALFED Bay-Delta Program welcomes your participation. Please use the space below for your written comments (attach additional sheets if necessary).

Comments:

Enclosed are my written comments that I wish to
have entered in the record to supplement the oral
testimony of mine at your San Diego hearing

Thank you

Name: William L. D'Bois

Organization: General, but for myself

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STATEMENT TO CALFED BAY DELTA PROGRAM
ON DRAFT PROGRAMMATIC EIS/EIR
AT RUBEN H. FLEET SCIENCE CENTER, BALBOA PARK, SAN DIEGO
September 1, 1999

SEP 07 1999

My name is William I. DuBois. I am a farmer and landowner in Imperial County. My address is 801 West Ross Road, El Centro 92243.

I have studied the Executive Summary, the Water Quality Program Plan, the Water Transfer Program Plan, the Water Use Efficiency Program Plan and the Levee System Integrity Program Plan, and have examined the other volumes of the EIS/EIR. I am reasonably well informed on the water supply and demand system on the Colorado River, since my farming property is entirely dependent on water from the Colorado.

For many years I have been concerned with water transfers that are being carried on in the state, particularly those involving the Colorado River. I have also closely followed the water development program of both the Bureau of Reclamation and the California Department of Water Resources, partly on my own initiative and also for the California Farm Bureau Federation, with which I have had a long relationship lobbying water matters.

It is clear to me that political constraints resulting from a poorly educated public have allowed the state to increase its population faster than it has increased the availability of water to serve that population's domestic and food and fiber needs.

It seems the purpose of CALFED's program is to increase the supply of water for wild fish, wild animal and wild plant life, and to satisfy anticipated increasing domestic demands. I have no problem with this objective. I am, however, greatly disturbed that this plan appears to approach its objective partly by reducing irrigation water supplies and partly by taking thousands of acres of farmland out of the hands of taxpaying private ownership. This shift will place a greater local tax burden on remaining property owners. It will reduce the productive capability of the state's total farmland during decades of conceded rapid growth in the population of food-eating, fiber-wearing humans. The result will be greater imports and lesser exports of agricultural

products. A plan like this puts the whole state's economy at a disadvantage, balance-of-trade wise. Why can't you also plan for meeting that anticipated increasing population's food and fiber requirements at least as well as you plan for their domestic water needs? And why don't you put more urgency in solving farm drainage problems instead of just buying the lands where drainage problems exist.

CALFED was promoted as a plan where all segments would get better together. I think CALFED forgot that in order to get better, a great many of the state's farms need more water, not less, and your plan to create more wetlands is going to worsen this imbalance by putting the burden on agricultural areas. I am pleased that CALFED plans for increasing the utility of groundwater reservoirs, but where is the surface reservoir need recognized and provided for? Groundwater reservoirs aren't much good for storing flash floods.

CALFED's plans seem to treat flash floods and high-rate snowmelts as events that merely require more levees. This, of course, shifts the flooding danger either further upstream or downstream, or both. CALFED's timid approach to water development in central and northern California results in Imperial Valley's being unable to increase its irrigated acreage. This is a permanent moratorium on growth in Imperial Valley in order to facilitate growth and expansion elsewhere. The Central California area not only has extensive overdrafting of its groundwater, but also is a floodplain which, at times, is in desperate need of flood control. To deny Imperial Valley any chance of expanding farmed acreage, while at the same time refusing to place flood control and water impoundment facilities in the Central Valley (i.e. the Auburn Dam), just does not seem to even approach the realm of "logical" statewide policy.

However, I am not opposed to transferring some water from Imperial, if the unintended consequences don't outweigh the benefits to Imperial. CALFED's plan seems to have been written using our water to benefit Northern California's environment, but not considering Imperial's environment.

I am personally offended by this because some of the increase in urban and instream and wetland supplies are, by substitution, coming from the existing uses in the southeastern part of the state. It has been theoretically calculated that I and my

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neighboring landowners in Imperial can furnish almost a half-million acre-feet of our present water supply for transfer to satisfy these shortages. We don't farm theoretically, we farm practically. We are gradually getting better with financial help we have received, in exchange for salvaged water, from MWD. Now we have received promises of help from San Diego Water Authority, but we can't salvage water faster than science, education and finances permit. And, not incidentally, the San Diego transfer now being worked out doesn't look all that good to a lot of us landowners, because it has us doing all the financing and also wrestling with the Salton Sea problem. Almost 100% of the water salvaged from irrigated farms in Imperial will directly reduce Salton Sea fresh water supplies, acre-foot for acre-foot.

Yes, we are painfully aware that the Sea is deteriorating anyway, but, so far, many fish have been able to survive for a while, probably depending on better water quality near the sources of supply.

What will happen to Salton Sea if our water salvage program succeeds? As the Sea's fresh water is reduced, most of the salt will continue to go to the Sea. Many people depend on Salton Sea for recreation, and some people and millions of birds depend on it for a livelihood. If CALFED depends on Imperial for solving part of the state's water shortage, as your EIR suggests, you must coincidentally work out a plan for Salton Sea before it is too late to save it. Why should Imperial sacrifice not only the quality of its rural way of life, but also the living habitat and ecosystems of untold numbers of wildlife, in order to promote urban growth and consumption, and supposedly improve wild life in some other part of the state?

Unless you have lived a long time, you may not be able to recognize what a severe water efficiency program can do to nature. When I was a young farmer, we had very few water efficient programs in Imperial, but we had lots of wildlife. Gophers, skunks, kangaroo rats, owls and hawks were plentiful. So were buzzards. Now we have cement lined all our ditches and cleaned up most of our ditchbanks and roads. We must be aware of the probability of unintended consequences. It's our water, our economy and our environment that CALFED would trade for growth elsewhere, for other people.